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ABSTRACT

This article briefly reviews some of the psychological research literature defining and assessing creativity, and examines such questions as: (1) Does creativity simply emerge as the expression of the genius of a gifted elite? (2) Can it be taught? If so, how? (3) What conditions foster creativity? (4) Is it related to intelligence and academic success? and (5) What are the personality traits of the creative person? It is suggested that we must be rescued from our mechanical condition in society's economic production in order to be restored to the human condition of self-esteem. "Creative education" must become the watch word for humanistic educators so people can find sanctuary in their own creativeness and in their ability to achieve harmony within themselves and to communicate that harmony to other cultures and other nations. (CS)

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"My heart leaps up when I behold
A rainbow in the sky..."

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Children and THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Almost invariably, when we read or hear the term, "creativity" or "creative process", our minds conjure up visions of famous paintings, sculptures, poems, novels, architecture, musical compositions, scientific discoveries or inventions by the geniuses of one era or another. The concepts of creativity and giftedness are so firmly bound together in our thinking that it is well-nigh impossible for most of us to embrace the idea that creativeness is a characteristic which we all share in varying degrees. A former colleague of mine, Zatella Turner, is a Shakespearean scholar. Several years ago, she appeared on a television program in celebration of the works of Shakespeare. She titled her presentation:"Shakespeare is for Everybody." Before her presentation was ended, I knew that Shakespeare was not merely for scholars of Elizabethan literature, but for parents and children, statesmen and politicians, lovers and lawyers everywhere. Likewise, Maslow (1956) has a conception of creativity that includes everyone. Referring to the findings of one of his studies on creativity, he states with appropriate certainty:

> This creativeness appears... not in the usual forms of writing books, composing music, or producing artistic objects, but rather may be much more humble. It is as if this special type of creativeness, being an expression of healthy personality, is projected out upon the world or touches whatever activity the person is engaged in. In this sense, there can be creative shoemakers or carpenters or clerks. Whatever one does can be done with certain spirit which arises out of the nature of the person performing the act.

As distinguished from "special talent creativity" that we recognize readily, this type of universal potentiality Maslow calls "self-actualizing creativity". Unfortunately, this creativity, seen by Maslow as being a part

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of the potentiality of all human beings is, more often than not, smothered by conformity; especially, in our schools where developing a scholar is, apparently, more important than developing a person. I believe that in the future, greater effort will be expended toward creativity for everybody.

The research literature on creativity deals predominantly with the problems of defining and assessing the trait. It pursues such questions as: (1), Does creativity simply emerge as the expression of the genius of a gifted elite? (2), Can it be taught? If so, how? (3), What conditions foster creativity? (4), Is it related to intelligence and academic success? (5), What are the personality traits of the creative person?

Let me review briefly the essence of the answers to these questions as found in the psychological literature. On the matter of definition and assessment, the scientists find creativity to be highly complex in nature, necessitating much more careful study before a definition can be agreed upon. Certainly, the assessment techniques that are now available are in the experimental stage and must be used with "a grain of salt" pending an agreed-upon definition and subsequently better techniques.

Does creativity belong to the gifted? Here, research is ambivalent. In subtle ways, the statement of the research problem leads one to expect that a creative response is a super-response of a giant mind, not to be found in the repertory of abilities of ordinary men. In support of what may be construed as an erroneous perception on my part, I cite the large number of studies of great scientists and great artists in pursuit of an understanding of the creative process. We average readers are quietly dissuaded from the idea that we, too, may be creative. On the other hand, a sizable contingent of creativity researchers like Torrance (1970) are vigorously working to restore our confidence in our own creativeness.

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His recent book, Encouraging Creativity in the Classroom, is a creative achievement in itself, and leaves no doubt that even the most disadvantaged child can be creative. What is even more encouraging is Norma Canner's (1968) demonstration that, through creative movement, the handicapped child (the cerebral palsied, the emotionally disturbed, the mentally retarded) can be creative. In the introduction to her lovely little book, ...And A Time To Dance, published by the Beacon Press, she says:

> I used to think that only special people had talent and only special people had the need to express their creative feelings. I didn't know that anyone could dance, and that people of great differences could communicate through movement, sharing their joys and pleasures, their angers and frustrations. Nor did I know that a large group of people could dance together and feel as one, or that you could dance alone and still be a part of the group.

Fortunately, she met a good teacher with a creative philosophy, who changed her doubt to affirmation

Can creativity be taught? If so, how? The short answer to this question is, yes. In experimental situations, trained groups have produced more than untrained groups. Creative persons achieve a closer approximation to the goals they set for themselves with instruction than they do without instruction. Through instruction in the basic skills of observation and control, the creative person is provided a sense of direction, and is not left at the mercy of chaotic spontaneity. Teaching is done not with the air of imposing a model to be imitated, but with the idea of providing techniques and skills that will make creating possible and satisfying. Otherwise, a completely "do-it-yourself" job will likely be roughhewn and noncommunicative. Skillful guidance without destroying the desire is imperative.

What is the fostering environment? In my opinion, there is more consensus in this area of the research literature than in any other, with

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the possible exception of the literature on the psychological traits of the creative person. Researchers agree that (1) ... must place a premium on ... is conducive to experimentation without fear of humiliating evaluation is essential. This is what Rogers calls psychological freedom and psychological safety. (2). An environment that makes one feel good about himself generates self-adequacy and self-confidence. A mentally healthy environment ... (3). Encouraging and accepting relationships with others enable the ... trust and implement his creative urges. Just one reading of Torrance' ... practical book on encouraging creativity in the classroom will convince ... of this fact. (4). For some creative work, the environment must provide ... edia materials as invitations to create. Stone (1967) deplores the ... that "we hear little of experimentation in setting up our schools and ... lassrooms as self-service centers in education. She finds too little ... experimentation in providing so many 'invitations to learning' with self-selection the key to their use that every kid would find a beginning ... place unique to him." If there were more classrooms such as described ... ere, children would be certain that their independence would be re... ... ...ed, cultivated, and supported. (5). For all forms of creativeness, the ... environment must provide stimulating and provocative experiences.

... wouldn't you know it! We are always interested in the possible ... exist between some factor or activity and intelligence or ... ...ere. First of all, I might say that our most popular tests of intelligence are, at present, being scrutinized very carefully to see that they measure in the name of intelligence. Secondly, creativity presents even greater definitional and assessment problems than does intelligence. ... ... we can reiterate is that unintelligent persons are not creative ... among the intelligent as measured by our tests, creativeness is distributed

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randomly so that practically no consistency occurs and the highly intelligent may or may not be highly creative. We must remember, of course, that the research most often cited for this answer (Getzels & Jackson, 1962) used subjects whose mean I.Q. was 132! As between creativity and academic success, the correlation coefficients are found to be low not because the creative student is academically slow, but because of his emphasis upon values that teachers generally reject. Researchers (Getzel & Jackson, 1962; Torrance, 1970) have reported that the creative student suspects that he is not as highly regarded by his teacher as is the student who, by some definition, is called intelligent but is not creative. Creative children too often are considered by their teachers to be less desirable pupils, less ambitious, less hard-working and studious. Consequently, they are not known for their high grades. Getzel and Jackson try to explain this behavior of the creative student by saying that he probably places greater value on humor and playfulness; whereas the "intelligent" student values success in the conventional sense. Additional contrasts are drawn between intelligence and creativity:

> The one mode tends toward retaining the known, learning the predetermined, and conserving what is. The second mode tends toward revising the known, exploring the undetermined, and constructing what might be. A person for whom the first mode is primary tends toward the usual and expected. A person for whom the second mode is primary tends toward the novel and the speculative. The one favors certainty, the other risk (Getzel & Jackson, 1962).

Torrance, also, tries to explain the attitude of the creative student, observing that the highly creative achieve as well as the highly intelligent without appearing to strive as hard. He says:

> My guess is that these highly creative children are learning while they appear to be "playing around", possibly through manipulative and exploratory activities which the teacher tries to prevent.

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What, then, are the traits that we expect a creative person to possess? What is he like, anyway? He impresses us with his freedom, his openness to and keen awareness of his surroundings, his sensitivity to reality--its beauty and its ugliness, the sights and sounds of ghetto streets as well as pleasant meadows. When he completes a creative act, being self critical, it pleases him as well as others for he is first to recognize its value. He does not hesitate to experiment with the new for he is skeptical of the old. His style of life is that of a nonconformist, an individualist, perhaps even an iconoclast; such is the independence of his mind and spirit. How else can he break out of the mold of the usual and expected? His originality brings freshness to the humdrum and the mundane. In his capacity to be totally absorbed, he persists far beyond the ordinary bounds in order to bring his idea to completion because it represents the realization of himself.

Can a little child have all these traits? He can begin. The developmental viewpoint on creativity provides ample room for growth through age-related, creative activities. The child needs most of all parents and teachers who have the creative viewpoint and who are willing to assist him in reaching the highest level of development of which he is capable.

This brings us face-to-face with the vital necessity to re-examine our social institutions in order to see if they have kept pace with a changing society, and if they are effectively carrying out their child development responsibilities. We still find cause to complain about the rigid adherence of the schools to the auditory-visual tradition in the teaching-learning process. The almost exclusive dependence upon the eye and ear prohibits other rich learning experiences attainable through the other sense modalities and body movement. In the tradition of Rudolf Laban, Bruce has had notable success in promoting learning through the dance and dance drama. The English show a willingness to implement in-

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novative methods of reaching children at the lower grade levels that I sometimes envy. It appears that the dominant conception of the American school is that learning must be in the abstract. Even in the area of creativity, a disproportionately large portion of the interest is in problem solving, divergent thinking, production and manipulation of ideas, and other such tasks, all "in the head". I call this the cognitive bias in creativity. The human being is equipped with so many avenues of expression and communication, that it is crippling to limit his development to two sensory channels and the cognitive domain. Birdwhistell (1970) argues for "multichannel reinforcement" for the "multisensory species". In this connection, he makes us aware of the relation of this principle to music, graphic art, and the dance.

The dance is a natural medium for developmental expression of the whole being. No paint is required, no clay or stone, no pen and ink, no musical instrument, really--just self and the urge to move in self-expression. While dancing is sometimes enhanced by musical accompaniment, well-chosen, frequently the instrument detracts. Just as the quality of the voice is best appreciated *a cappella*, so without music the natural beauty of the dance may be seen and appreciated, *a corpora*, if I may be allowed to coin a term. The marvelously constructed human body makes possible unmatchable grace and versatility of movement both as a whole and with skillful use of body segments. Like the community sing, the spontaneous, free dance of folk and children is a magnificent equalizer of human expression. Although we have come to appreciate the stylized dance forms, it is in the mode of folk dancing that we experience affinity and communication across cultural and national boundaries.

As early as 1911, G. Stanley Hall, a pioneer American psychologist, wrote of the educational value of dancing and of pantomining. The thrust toward inter-cultural understanding in the twenties and the thirties stim-

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lated an interest in the dances of South American and European countries at the popular level of American society. More recently, this interest has grown to include the countries of Asia and Africa. Perhaps, we have not explored sufficiently the possibility of the dance and dance exchanges as another means of lessening international tensions.

In this age of technological advancement, there have arisen many complaints asserting that man has lost his once enviable position as the necessary factor in all the world's work. He has, in the opinion of many, become superfluous and depersonalized in the vast bureaucracies of our present-day interprises. Generally, he contributes in only a minute way to the outcome of the productive processes. Hence, he has developed a sense of estrangement and alienation from his fellowmen and from the products of their joint endeavors. Consequently, he is destructive rather than constructive, selfish, rather than altruistic, stagnant and impotent rather than active and creative. Caught in the bureaucratic bind, our schools reflect the malaise of stereotypical and sterile routines of mass production. One writer (Kneller, 1966) believes:

> Much of the disorder of contemporary youth...is an explosion of potentially creative energy that can find no other outlet. In the schools this energy is frustrated by regulations designed to keep masses of young people in order by making them behave in unison. It is frustrated, too, by tired, over-worked teachers, who cannot spare the time to nurture the creativity of the individual student because they must struggle amid the impersonal web of administrative detail and mass guidance and counseling procedures to instill into their swollen classes the basic requirements of a stereotyped syllabus....
>
> Pupil and teacher must be rescued from a system that no longer educates individuals but processes multitudes....

The essence of this lamentation is a demand that we be rescued from our mechanical condition as cogs in the wheels of economic production, and that we be restored to the human condition of self-esteem. Education must

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go the second mile by not only promoting all observable talent, but also by seeking to discover hidden talent. It must employ interdisciplinary understandings so as to leave no stone unturned as we strive to elicit response and expression of the total being. We must regain our status as creators of a world for human beings. "Creative education" has become the watchword for those humanistic educators whose guiding principle is the development of every child in every area of his potential to the fullest extent possible. In creative education, disciplines must become allies instead of enemies. Increased specialization in academic subject matter which, itself, is a by-product of advanced technology, threatens to give us a piecemeal education and to deny us the global vision demanded of us in setting valid educational goals. Similarly, in the creative arts, failure to appreciate the inherent harmony within a variety of art forms may deny us the aesthetic impact of experiencing the same creative idea expressed in several forms at once. For example, I recall a simple but rich experience of watching an artist paint a tree to the rhythm and melody of Joyce Kilmer's poem that had already been set to music and was now being sung in a rich contralto accompanied by the organ. The gracefully flowing strokes of the artist seemed to emphasize the cadences of the song. Indeed, the unison and the timing were so perfect that I could not tell, emotionally, whether the singer was painting a picture or the painter was singing a song. Since then, in my imagination, I have added a group of dancers, dancing Trees; another small group, pantomining Trees; one person, signing with her hand to communicate the poem to her deaf friends in the audience; and finally, a choral speaking group, rendering an antiphonal recitation of Trees from the lofts. Perhaps, I now have need of a conductor to see that all parts

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are appropriately synchronized. But then he probably would want a symphony orchestra to replace the organ!

To summarize,

In a world of unprecedented technological advancement, the humanistic challenge to education is to make people fully alive and whole. People must be educated to find sanctuary in their own creativeness and in their own abilities to achieve harmony within themselves and to communicate that harmony to others--other cultures, other nations. We can accomplish this goal only by developing creative persons in whatever spheres their talents lie. When we have developed the creative habit, we are equipped to deal with life in creative ways. Creativity transcends frustration, failure, physical handicaps, humiliation, and tragedy. It is the symbol and expression of triumph. The creative person is never helpless, never poor.

Keturah E. Whitehurst

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